Vale District Bureau of Land Management
Hobo Spring (JDR 4078)
Reconstruction and Storage Tank (JDR 4684) Installation
Allotment Number Four (10203)
Environmental Assessment
EA No. OR-030-02- 06

Decision Record

This Decision Record documents my decision to select the proposed alternative for authorization for livestock operators to reconstruct Hobo Spring development with placement of a water storage tank and pipeline for gravity distribution of livestock water to one additional tank placed down-slope of the existing troughs. This action was analyzed in the attached Environmental Assessment (EA OR-030-02-006). This proposed action is tiered to and is consistent with the Northern Malheur Management Framework Plan dated March 1983, the Ironside Rangeland Program Summary dated 1981, the Malheur County Land Use Plan, and BLM policy. Additionally, it is consistent with the proposed alternative of the Proposed Southeastern Oregon Resource Management Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement dated April 2001.

My decision is to authorize redevelopment of Hobo Spring as above and reassign maintenance of the redesigned rangeland project to livestock operators authorized to graze livestock in Allotment Number Four by way of a cooperative agreement. The following mitigation measures will be implemented to minimize negative impacts to public land resource values:

- All equipment used to partially burry the proposed storage tank, install troughs, and to lay proposed pipeline would be power-washed prior to movement to the project site to avoid introduction of undesired and noxious weed species.
- Interest in excluding livestock from riparian vegetation communities adjacent to the springs and location of water overflow discharge from troughs was proposed by a few BLM staff members. Review of the extent of riparian vegetation adjacent to the springs in early 2003 indicates that maintenance of exclusion fencing would outweigh limited benefit to riparian function at this site (see attached photos).
- In accordance with guidance provided in BLM Technical Reference 1737-17, "A Guide to Managing, Restoring, and Conserving Springs in the Western United States" and the Proposed Southeastern Oregon Resource Management Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement, any reconstruction of water collecting facilities at Hobo Spring would not attempt to dewater the spring source, but provide for some water to continue to naturally flow on the surface and subsurface to maintain proper hydrologic function.
- The storage tank will be labeled as an enclosed space and comply with identified safety requirements.

/s/ Tom Dabbs
Tom Dabbs
Field Manager
Malheur Resource Area

05-13-2003
Date

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Finding of No Significant Impact

The Malheur Resource Area of the Bureau of Land Management, Vale District has analyzed a proposal authorize livestock operators to reconstruct Hobo Spring development with placement of a water storage tank and pipeline for gravity distribution of livestock water to one additional tank placed downslope of the existing troughs. The analysis included a no action alternative. Based on the following summary of consequences and as discussed in the environmental assessment, I have determined that implementation of the proposed action will continue to meet resource management objectives defined in the Northern Malheur Management Framework Plan and the Ironside Rangeland Program Summary, both of which constitute the land use plan for Malheur Resource Area. Impacts to riparian vegetation communities and thus riparian function would not be increased and may be reduced with opportunity for livestock to water more quickly and move to adjacent upland areas. Opportunities to implement additional actions, such as site-specific livestock exclusion, at a later date are not forgone with implementation of the proposed action.

Impacts to critical elements of the human environment, including ten points of significance identified in 40 CFR 1508.27(b), are not determined to be in excess of limits requiring the development of an environmental impact statement. Negative impacts to desired perennial vegetation communities and thus watershed stability are not anticipated to increase with the proposed action. Additionally, management direction provided in the selected proposed action alternative is more consistent with the resource management direction proposed in the soon to be completed Southeastern Oregon Resource Management Plan.

As a result, on the basis of the information contained in this environmental assessment and all other information available, it is my determination that the proposed action does not constitute a major federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment and that an environmental impact statement is not required.

/s/ Tom Dabbs
Tom Dabbs
Field Manager
Malheur Resource Area

04-17-2003
Date

Vale District Bureau of Land Management
Hobo Spring (JDR 4078)
Reconstruction and Storage Tank (JDR 4684) Installation
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Table of Contents

1 Purpose of and Need for Action

Hobo Spring (JDR 4087) (T.19S., R.41E., W.M. section 15 NW¼NE¼) was developed adjacent to Hart Creek in 1970 to provide clean livestock water within West Willow Creek Pasture of Allotment Number Four (figures 1 and 2). Hobo Spring Tank (JDR 4684) was installed at the spring in 1972 to increase the capacity for water storage. Limited mid-summer flows from the development and the need to provide quick refill of troughs influenced the livestock operator to investigate opportunities to increase storage capacity further. A request was received from Tim Smith on December 15, 2002 to place a water storage tank (approximately 10,000 – 15,000 gallon) below Hobo Spring to catch the overflow from the water troughs. The tank would supply an on demand control mechanism to fill an additional trough placed below the tank.

Spring redevelopment and installation of additional water storage capacity are fully consistent with decisions in the Northern Malheur Management Framework Plan (MFP) dated March 14, 1983, the Ironside Rangeland Program Summary Record of Decision (RPS) dated 1981, the Malheur County Land Use Plan, and BLM policy. Management direction provided in the current land use plan, the MFP, as well as that proposed in the BLM's effort to update land use planning for much of Vale District in the South Eastern Oregon Resource Management Plan (SEORMP), include management of riparian communities to attain proper functioning condition as well as meeting additional upland rangeland, wildlife, fisheries, aquatic, and water quality objectives.

Possible decisions to be made as a result of information provided in this environmental assessment include the types of actions which would be authorized to provide dependable water for livestock use while protecting riparian and other resources at Hobo Spring and within East Willow Creek Pasture, including whether to authorize the installation of a water storage tank and additional trough. No other federal, state or local government is involved in the NEPA analysis of the proposed actions, beyond issue identification, review, and comment on content of the draft document.

Internal scoping of issues relevant to the proposed action identified the need to ensure livestock management actions implemented did not impair meeting riparian, upland vegetation, watershed, special status species, and cultural resource management objectives presented in the land use plan and Proposed South Eastern Oregon Resource Management Plan. The level of controversy of livestock management actions implemented within Allotment Number Four is moderate with one regional environmental organization requesting to be informed of proposed actions. Additionally, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife is typically informed of proposed livestock management actions as is the Malheur County Court. Memoranda of Understanding between BLM and a number of Tribes (the Burns Paiute Tribe and the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Reservation) are in place to define coordination.

The proposed actions implemented to provide adequate livestock water at Hobo Spring would be implemented with necessary revisions to the cooperative agreements for the maintenance of rangeland projects (form 4120-6).

2 Alternatives Including the Proposed Action

This section describes the proposed action and the no action alternative. Alternatives such as limiting grazing use in East Willow Creek to spring only when somewhat more dependable flows of water are present were considered but not analyzed as described in section 2.3.

2.1 Proposed Action

The existing spring development at Hobo Spring would be maintained with a head box supplying water to two troughs downgrade adjacent to the road. A tank would be partially buried an appropriate distance downgrade of the second trough and be supplied with overflow water by means of a buried pipeline. A third trough would be located an estimated distance of 1700 feet from the partially buried tank. Water from the tank would be supplied to the trough on demand through buried pipe and a float valve arrangement.

Overflow from the tank would be returned to the Hart Creek stream channel. The proposed layout of the spring development, water storage and pipeline system is attached.

2.2 No Action Alternative

The spring development at Hobo Springs would be maintained as constructed in 1970 and revised in 1972. Two troughs would be retained to supply livestock water for a portion of East Willow Creek Pasture adjacent to Hobo Spring.

2.3 Alternative Considered, Though not Analyzed

Limiting grazing use in East Willow Creek to spring only when somewhat more dependable flows of water are present was considered but not analyzed. A grazing rotation was implemented in Allotment Number Four in 1985 through an allotment management plan with scheduled use of North Gravel Pasture annually for a period immediately following April turnout, followed by later use of West and East Willow Creek pastures in rotation through the remainder of the season. Disruption of this schedule to improve water availability at Hobo Spring would complicate analysis including many more uncertain impacts. Additionally, it would cause similar water problems with mid-summer use of North Gravel Pasture. Thus available alternatives were limited to authorizing the request with appropriate mitigation actions or not authorizing the request

3 Affected Environment

This section presents relevant resource components of the existing environment which constitute baseline information.

3.1 Vegetation, Soils and Watershed

Vegetation in Allotment Number Four consists of shrub steppe plant communities dominated by sagebrush species and bunchgrasses. The vegetation type which covers the majority of the allotments is dominated by Wyoming big sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata ssp wyomingensis*) or stiff sagebrush (*Artemisia rigida*) with an understory of perennial grass species, primarily bluebunch wheatgrass (*Pseudorogneria spicata*), Sandberg bluegrass (*Poa secunda*), Thurber's needlegrass (*Stipa thurberiana*), basin wildrye (*Leymus cinereus*) and cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*). Depleted rangelands within five pastures, including East Willow Creek Seeding, were seeded to adapted nonnative species, primarily crested wheatgrass (*Agropyron cristatum*) and now have varying levels of sagebrush reestablishment. Microbiotic crusts composed of cyanobacteria, green algae, lichens, mosses, microfungi, and other bacteria occupy many open spaces between higher plants.

The soils found in the area near Hobo Spring were surveyed and described in Oregon's Long Range Requirements for Water 1969, I-10 Malheur Drainage Basin. The major soils found in the area occur mostly on slopes between 7 – 12%.

Unit 56 soils are shallow, well drained soils with clayey subsoils and cemented pans. They occur on very extensive, gently sloping to moderately steep old fans on high terrace remnants. Native vegetation consists mostly of big sagebrush, low sagebrush, rabbitbrush, budsage, Atriplex spp., needlegrass, and squirreltail grass.

The area has Unit 60 soils that are moderately fine textured, well drained soils underlain by old lacustrine sediments. They occur on gently sloping to hilly uplands mainly in conjunction with Unit 98 soils. Native vegetation consists mostly of big sagebrush, rabbitbrush, bluebunch wheatgrass, and Sandberg bluegrass.

Hobo Spring itself is located in the drainage bottom where the slope is <7% and the soils are slightly deeper due to deposition of materials in the floodplain/terrace areas of the most recently active drainage channel.

Watersheds within Allotment Number Four drain south to Malheur River in the Lower Malheur River subbasin (17050117) which drains east into the Snake River and subsequently to the Columbia River and the Pacific Ocean.

3.2 Noxious Weeds

Scotch thistle (*Onopordum acanthium*), an aggressive biennial, dominates a small acreage at a number of locations within the Allotment Number Four. Whitetop or hoary cress (*Cardaria spp.*), another perennial noxious weed is also present, especially adjacent to roads and other routes of seed distribution and more so, adjacent to Hobo Spring. Medusahead (*Taeniatherum caput_medusae*), an aggressive annual grass, is present at limited sites with clay layers present in the soil. Perennial pepperweed (*Lepidium latifolium*), an aggressive, long-lived perennial, is present adjacent to a number of streams, especially Malheur River. Russian knapweed (*Acroptilon repens*), a deep rooted long-lived perennial, occurs three miles south of Hobo Spring on public and private land at Cemetery Spring and in surrounding areas. Noxious weed distribution in the allotment is more significant at lower elevation adjacent to cultivated lands and areas of greater historical livestock impacts. Noxious weed presence is sparse in areas dominated by healthy perennial species.

3.3 Livestock Grazing

Allotment Number Four is located immediately northwest of Harper, Oregon (figure 1), and is part of the Westfall Management Unit. Boundaries of the allotment are approximately defined by US highway 20 to the south, the Harper/Westfall road to the east, the ridge between Malheur River and Bully Creek to the north, and Black Canyon to the west.

Allotment Number Four Management Plan was implemented in 1985 which defined terms and conditions of livestock management practices implemented to protect public land resources. The 58,390 (99% federal) acre allotment is currently divided into 11 pastures. A number of small enclosures/exclosures are also present. Six livestock operators are authorized to graze cattle within the allotment within three areas-of-use between April 1 and October 31 annually. Frank Fisher and Smith & Smith Livestock have recently been authorized to use East Willow Creek Pasture along with West Willow and North Gravel pastures in their rotation. April 1 turnout occurs annually in North Gravel Pasture. An alternate year rotation makes grazing use of either East or West Willow Creek Pasture beginning May 1 followed by rotation to the other pasture at mid-summer. Operators have option to return to North Gravel Pasture September 1, although seldom do as a result of limited water and rough topography. Frank Fisher is annual authorized to graze 60 head of cattle during the season while Smith & Smith Livestock is authorized to graze 145 head of cattle.

Assessment of rangeland standards and guidelines in accordance with 43 CFR 4180 is planned within the Mainstem Malheur River Geographic Management Area, including Allotment Number Four, during FY 2005.

3.4 Wildlife

Allotment Number Four includes year-long and summer only range for mule deer and pronghorn antelope. Elk also make limited seasonal use. Other wildlife species found in the area include neotropical migratory song birds, small mammals and reptiles.

No known wildlife species listed as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 are present within or adjacent to Allotment Number Four. Bureau Sensitive, Assessment and Tracking species include western toad, feruginous hawk, loggerhead shrike, western burrowing owl, western sage

grouse, pygmy rabbit, desert horned lizard, Mohave black-collared lizard, and northern sagebrush lizard. Little information is currently available on numbers and distribution of these species.

Habitats within Allotment Number Four supporting sage grouse include those supporting leks, nesting and brood rearing. Sage grouse are seasonally present in a number of the pastures with two known lek sites, one in the northwest corner of North Gravel Pasture and one in the north central portion of Hog Creek Pasture. The nearest lek to Hobo Spring is the site in North Gravel Pasture, 4.75 miles west of the spring. Sagegrouse have been observed wintering in the vicinity of Hobo Spring (information from Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife (ODF&W)).

Redband/rainbow trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss ssp*) occur in the upper reaches of Hog Creek, where pools and lower water temperatures provide some refuge through most of the year. No fish species are known to be present within aquatic systems associated with Hobo Spring including Hart Creek.

3.5 Recreation and Visual Resources

Dispersed outdoor recreation in and near Allotment Number Four consists primarily of occasional off highway vehicle use within designated open areas and the hunting of upland birds and big game animals. Some dispersed general sightseeing occurs. The public land portion of the allotment is within visual resource management (VRM) Class II (Malheur River Canyon), III and IV areas. Hobo Spring is surrounded by a minimum six mile buffer of class IV VRM. The objective of each class is as follows:

- Class II is to retain the existing character of the landscape. The level of change to landscape characteristics should be low. Management activities may be seen but should not attract the attention of a casual observer. Any change must conform to the basic elements of form, line, color, and texture in the predominant natural features of the characteristic landscape.
- Class III is to partially retain the existing character of the landscape. Moderate levels of change are acceptable. Management activities may attract attention but should not dominate the view of a casual observer. Changes should conform to the basic elements of the predominant natural features of the characteristic landscape.
- Class IV is to provide for management activities that require major modification of the landscape. These management activities may dominate the view and become the focus of viewer attention. However, every effort should be made to minimize the impact of these projects by carefully locating activities, minimizing disturbance, and designing the projects to conform to the characteristic landscape.

3.6 Cultural Resources

Pre_European contact Native American peoples were extremely well adapted to their environment. The subsistence economy was strongly oriented toward gathering and collecting because plant foods were more abundant and dependable than fowl, fish or mammals. Mammals provided skins, furs, tools and many other by_products of aesthetic and practical value. Insects were often eaten. Beetles, grasshoppers, locusts, crickets, ants and caterpillars were consumed, as well as most eggs and larva. Historic documents indicate that several hundred plants were used by the Indians of the Great Basin for medicinal purposes, fiber sources and food. The Native people of the Great Basin, who practiced the ancestral lifeways into the 19th century were heirs to an extremely ancient cultural tradition with a technology both effective and efficient, with many multi-functional, light-weight and expendable tools.

Exploration into this area during the Historic period began with the exp editions of John Jacob Aster, after he heard the stories from the Lewis and Clark Expedition of 1804_1806. The first written observations of southeastern Oregon can be found in journals kept by men involved in the expansion of fur trapping territory. Trapping occurred along the major and minor tributaries in the area: Owyhee, Snake, Malheur, North Fork Malheur and South Fork Malheur Rivers. The era of the fur trade provided the basis for

American families to travel west. For Native Americans, increased use of the Oregon Trail burdened grazing resources, killed off game, and displaced resident bands.

The Malheur Reservation located north of Juntura covered 1,778,560 acres and extended east almost to Westfall. The Reservation was established at Fort Harney in 1872, to contain "all the roving and straggling bands" in southeastern Oregon after the ending of hostilities in 1868. However, the area was only occupied between 1871 and 1878 when, through a series of circumstances, groups abandoned the locality to participate in the Bannock War of 1878. Those who participated in the war and some who did not were interned for several years on the Yakima Reservation. On May 21, 1883, the president issued an order restoring to the public domain the Malheur Reservation except 320 acres on which the old military post of Camp Harney stands. The reservation went on the market and was sold to Euro-American livestock ranchers in 1883.

Cultural resource surveys conducted in adjacent areas have been limited to areas where surface disturbing projects have been proposed. Surveys have been conducted along Hart Creek for Blacktop Reservoiur, Hobo Spring #2, Hardpan Reservoir, Pats Reservoir, and cattleguard placement. No cultural resources were located at any of these project locations.

3.7 Special Status Plants

No plant species listed or proposed for listing under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 are known to be present in the vicinity of Hobo Spring. Habitats known to support Malheur fiddleneck (*Amsinkia carinata*), a special status plant species which is listed by the State of Oregon as Threatened, are present adjacent to Chicken Creek and Brown Butte Reservoir, seven miles south of Hobo Spring. Habitat which supports this species is not found in the vicinity of Hobo Spring.

3.8 Riparian Values

The primary management objective to improve riparian habitat adjacent to springs and streams, identified in the Ironside Rangeland Program Summary, was to decrease livestock concentrations and fecal coliform bacteria. The RPS stated the program would significantly improve habitat conditions for bird species as well as other terrestrial animals requiring riparian habitat. Water developments and fencing were expected to result in a more even distribution of livestock, with fewer animals around perennial streams and water quality to improve. No wetlands other than riparian communities associated with streams, springs, and constructed reservoirs are present within Allotment Number Four. Limited herbaceous riparian vegetation is present in the channel below Hobo Spring with little evidence of livestock impact from scheduled summer livestock grazing in recent years.

3.9 Areas of Critical Environmental Concern

Black Canyon Area of Critical Environmental Concern/Research Natural Area (ACEC/RNA), within portions of West Miller Creek Pasture of Allotment Number Four, is recommended for designation within the SEORMP based on its representation of the rigid sagebrush/Sandberg bluegrass, western juniper/big sagebrush/bluebunch wheatgrass, riparian community dominated by coyote willow with Pacific willow, and first to third order stream system in sagebrush zone vegetation cells identified by the Oregon Natural Heritage Program. Additionally, the special status redband trout and habitat, have been identified as relevant and important values. The east boundary of the Black Canyon ACEC/RNA is ten miles southwest of Hobo Spring.

3.10 Wild Horse and Burro

Hog Creek Wild Horse Herd Management Areas (HMA) is located within North Gravel, South Gravel, and East Miller Creek Pastures of Allotment Number Four. The east boundary of this HMA is 1.5 miles west of Hobo Spring. Thus, actions implemented at Hobo Spring will have no direct impact on wild horses.

3.11 Climate/Topography

Allotment Number Four is composed of rolling hills and steep talus slopes where the elevation above sea level ranges from approximately 2600 feet at the north allotment boundary adjacent to Malheur River to 5200 feet elevation on South Mountain within Hog Creek Pasture. Hobo Spring is located at 2860 feet elevation. Semi desert shrub steppe vegetation communities result from cold winters and hot dry summers. The long term average annual precipitation is between ten and twelve inches, dependent on elevation, aspect, and typical storm tracks. Precipitation occurs primarily as snow fall during the winter with occasional mid-summer thunder storms. Climate and topography would not be affected by the proposed action or the no action alternative.

3.12 Other Mandatory Elements

The following mandatory elements are either not present or would not be affected by the proposed action or alternatives:

- Air Quality
- Water Quality
- Native American Religious Concerns
- Hazardous Wastes
- Wilderness or Wilderness Study Areas
- Prime or Unique Farmlands
- Wetlands/Flood Plains
- Environmental Justice
- Actions to Expedite Energy Related Projects (Executive Order No. 13212 of May 18, 2001)

4 Environmental Consequences

This chapter is organized by alternatives to illustrate the differences between the proposed action and the no action alternatives.

4.1 Proposed Action Alternative

Consequences of implementing the proposed alternative; authorization to install a storage tank and additional livestock water trough at Hobo Spring, would result as summarized in the following sections.

4.1.1 Vegetation, Soils and Watershed

Proposed installation of additional water storage capacity provided by a partially buried tank and installation of an additional watering trough approximately 1700 feet down-drainage will result in direct impact to vegetation communities dominated by whitetop, cheatgrass, and/or seeded crested wheatgrass as a result of soils disturbance required to install livestock watering facilities. Additionally, cattle concentration adjacent to an additional trough down-drainage will relocate the immediate area around troughs impacted by cattle during watering. It is anticipated that with additional storage capacity, the duration of time spent at all troughs associated with Hobo Spring will be reduced since less dominate cows will not be required to wait for troughs to refill with only the flow from the spring when more dominant cows drink troughs down.

Impacts to soils and watershed values would be minimally changed from those which have occurred in recent years, as analyzed in Appendix R of the SEORMP, since neither the season nor the intensity of livestock use would be changed. The potential for localized soil compaction in areas adjacent to trough and associated loafing areas is anticipated to be decreased as identified above due to a reduction in time necessary for cattle to water.

4.1.2 Noxious weeds

Ground disturbance and dispersal of noxious weeds and undesirable species is anticipated to be little changed with proposed changes to livestock watering facilities at Hobo Spring. Since whitetop, cheatgrass and other annual grass and forb species dominate the dry stream bank of Hart Creek downstream of Hobo Spring, relocation of some impacts from livestock concentration around an additional water trough placed 1700 feet east of the existing troughs would not increase or change the dominance or distribution of noxious weeds. The need for surveys and treatment of sites invaded by these species would be unchanged.

Traffic and ground disturbance during construction and maintenance of the watering facilities would slightly increase risk for dispersal of weed seed and other undesirable plant materials along roads and routes of access as well as the area of project construction, providing sites for new weed establishment. The anticipated increase in noxious weed presence or dominance due to water system construction or maintenance is small with limited cumulative consequences when added to existing threats.

4.1.3 Livestock Grazing

Established levels of livestock grazing use within East Willow Creek Pasture and the remainder of Allotment Number Four would be unchanged with implementation of the proposed actions. Seasons of livestock use and implementation of grazing schedules defined within the 1985 allotment management plan would be unchanged. Livestock operators would continue to be responsible for maintenance of Hobo Spring development with additional responsibility for maintenance of the newly installed storage tank, pipeline and trough.

4.1.4 Wildlife

Negative impacts to wildlife would be minimal as a result of constructing the proposed changes to livestock watering facilities at Hobo Spring. Potential for additional late season water for wildlife species would be increased with storage capacity increased, especially in drier years and years when livestock are not present East Willow Pasture during late summer.

4.1.5 Special Status Species

Sage grouse have complex life histories and often require large home ranges to survive. Other than the location of leks and ODF&W observations of wintering use adjacent to Hobo Spring, there is no information in BLM files concerning sage grouse habitat use in this allotment. Proposed changes to water storage facilities at Hobo Spring are not anticipated to affect habitat quality negatively or positively.

4.1.6 Fisheries and Aquatic Species

Since Hart Creek does not support fisheries, nor does it supply stream flow to fish bearing streams, proposed actions are not anticipated to affect fisheries. Aquatic species associated with the spring and minimal seasonal stream flow may be marginally affected by additional dewatering of the channel flow as water is diverted to the proposed storage tank and additional trough.

4.1.7 Recreation and Visual Resources

Recreation values would be little changed by the proposed change in water storage at Hobo Spring. Visual impacts resulting from proposed installation of a storage tank, pipeline and trough would be consistent with the management objectives for VRM Class IV. Visual impacts from disturbance of vegetation and soil resources would be minimally changed from existing conditions on public lands as a result of partially burying the tank in an area adjacent to an access road and existing spring development.

4.1.8 Cultural Resources

A Class III cultural resource survey of the area of the proposed development would be conducted prior to project initiation. Impacts to cultural values would be avoided or mitigated by design changes or facilities placement.

4.1.9 Special Status Plants

Special status plant species would not be affected by the proposed actions. Although the site of proposed fence construction does not include habitat of known special status species, surveys would be conducted to locate any unknown special status plant sites prior to construction. The facilities would be located to mitigate potential negative impacts.

4.1.10 Riparian Values

As identified above, riparian resources adjacent to Hart Creek have not been inventoried nor has an assessment of proper function of any identified riparian resources been completed. Proposed actions would not change the season or intensity of livestock grazing within East Willow Creek Pasture or adjacent to Hobo Spring. Therefore, the proposed action is not anticipated to impact limited riparian vegetation below Hobo Spring to a greater extent than is currently occurring. Opportunities to further protect riparian values which may be identified in the future would not be forgone with implementation of the proposed action.

4.2 No Action Alternative

Consequences of implementing the no action alternative, retention of Hobo Spring Development with water storage limited to two troughs as designed in 1970 and modified in 1972, would result as summarized in the following sections.

4.2.1 Vegetation, Soils and Watersheds

The no action alternative would not affect vegetation resources in ways other than are currently occurring. Upland management objectives identified in the RPS would continue to be met, although localized areas of livestock concentration, primarily adjacent to water sources such as Hobo Spring, would hold vegetation communities in less than desired conditions.

The no action alternative would affect soils or watershed values in ways similar to those currently occurring.

4.2.2 Noxious weeds

The no action alternative would not change noxious weed distribution or dominance in ways other than are currently occurring. Localized soil disturbance and existing vectors of distribution of noxious weed plant material, including those associated with livestock grazing, would continue. The need for continued surveys and localized treatment would continue.

4.2.3 Livestock Grazing

Livestock management in Allotment Number Four would continue as defined in the 1985 allotment management plan, pending completion of assessment of standards and guidelines and evaluation scheduled within the next few years. No change in levels or seasons of livestock use would occur in the short-term.

4.2.4 Wildlife

Wildlife habitat values would remain unchanged with no additional direct impacts to wildlife species. Potential benefits from riparian improvement associated with reductions in livestock concentration adjacent to Hobo Spring would not be realized.

4.2.5 Fisheries and Aquatic Species

As above, fisheries are not present within the project area and off site impacts are not anticipated. Limiting development at Hobo Spring to that currently constructed could retain a minimal amount of late season water, especially in years of late season livestock use within East Willow Creek Pasture, within the channel of Hart Creek

4.2.6 Recreation and Visual Resources

The no action alternative would not change current recreation opportunities or visual resources.

4.2.7 Cultural Resources

The no action alternative would not affect cultural resources in ways other than are currently occurring.

4.2.8 Special Status Plants

No known or suspected impacts to special status plant species have occurred in the East Willow Creek Pasture since implementation of the 1985 allotment management plan.

4.2.9 Riparian Values

Mid-summer grazing of pastures containing potential riparian resources would continue to have localized impacts to those public land values in areas of livestock concentration. Assessment of rangeland standards and guidelines scheduled for 2005 will identify which if any portions of Hart Creek support riparian vegetation. Potential impacts to riparian values from hot season livestock use are summarized in Appendix R of the SEORMP.

5 Adverse Effects

Unavoidable adverse effects from implementation of the proposed or no action alternative are limited to those impacts to soils, vegetation and riparian function described in the text above.

6 Short Term and Long Term Impacts

Short-term impacts to vegetation resources during construction of proposed water storage facilities and one additional livestock watering trough would be offset by long-term benefits resulting from potential reduction in livestock concentration adjacent to Hobo Spring. In the event that riparian values adjacent to Hart Creek are identified with the assessment of rangeland standards and guidelines within the next few

years, implementation of the proposed action or the no action alternative would not forgo opportunities to manage those riparian values in an appropriate manner.

7 Irreversible or Irretrievable Commitment of Resources

In the event that implementation of the proposed actions to modify livestock watering facilities at Hobo Spring are found to not meet current land use plan objectives, objectives identified in the Proposed SEORMP, or rangeland standards and guidelines, existing grazing schedules could be revised or modifications to the design of Hobo Spring development could be implemented with no irreversible or irretrievable loss of resources. Similarly, should the proposed storage tank, pipeline and trough not function as expected to supply additional livestock water or should it have unforseen negative impacts, it could be removed or redesigned with no irreversible or irretrievable commitment of resources.

8 Mitigating Measures

Based on BLM staff input, the following mitigating actions would be implemented to minimize undesired negative impacts of implementing the proposed action:

- All equipment used to partially burry the proposed storage tank, install troughs, and to lay proposed pipeline would be power-washed prior to movement to the project site to avoid introduction of undesired and noxious weed species.
- Interest in excluding livestock from riparian vegetation communities adjacent to the springs and location of water overflow discharge from troughs was proposed by a few BLM staff members. Review of the extent of riparian vegetation adjacent to the springs in early 2003 indicates that maintenance of exclusion fencing would outweigh limited benefit to riparian function at this site (see attached photos).
- In accordance with guidance provided in BLM Technical Reference 1737-17, "A Guide to Managing, Restoring, and Conserving Springs in the Western United States" and the Proposed Southeastern Oregon Resource Management Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement, any reconstruction of water collecting facilities at Hobo Spring would not attempt to dewater the spring source, but provide for some water to continue to naturally flow on the surface and subsurface to maintain proper hydrologic function. .
- The storage tank wouldl be labeled as an enclosed space and comply with identified safety requirements.

9 List of Preparers

Steve Christensen	Rangeland Management Specialist
Ron Rembowski	Rangeland Management Specialist
Tom Hilken	Rangeland Management Specialist;
"	Planning and Environmental Coordinator
Jim Johnson	Wild Horse Specialist
Bob Alward	Outdoor Recreation Planner, Wilderness
Jean Findley	Botanist
Diane Pritchard	Archaeologist
Shaney Rockefeller	Hydrologist/Soil Scientist
Al Bammann	Wildlife Biologist
Cynthia Tait	Fisheries Biologist
Lynne Silva	Range Technician, Weeds
Jon Freeman	Realty Specialist
Tom Dabbs	Field Manager, Malheur Resource Area

List of Agencies, Organizations, and Persons to Whom Copies of the EA are Sent:

Livestock operators; Allotment Number Four

Northwest Environmental Defense Center, Interested Public
Walt Van Dyke, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
Albert Teeman, Tribal Chairperson, Burns Paiute Tribe
Edward Potaws, Chairman, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Reservation

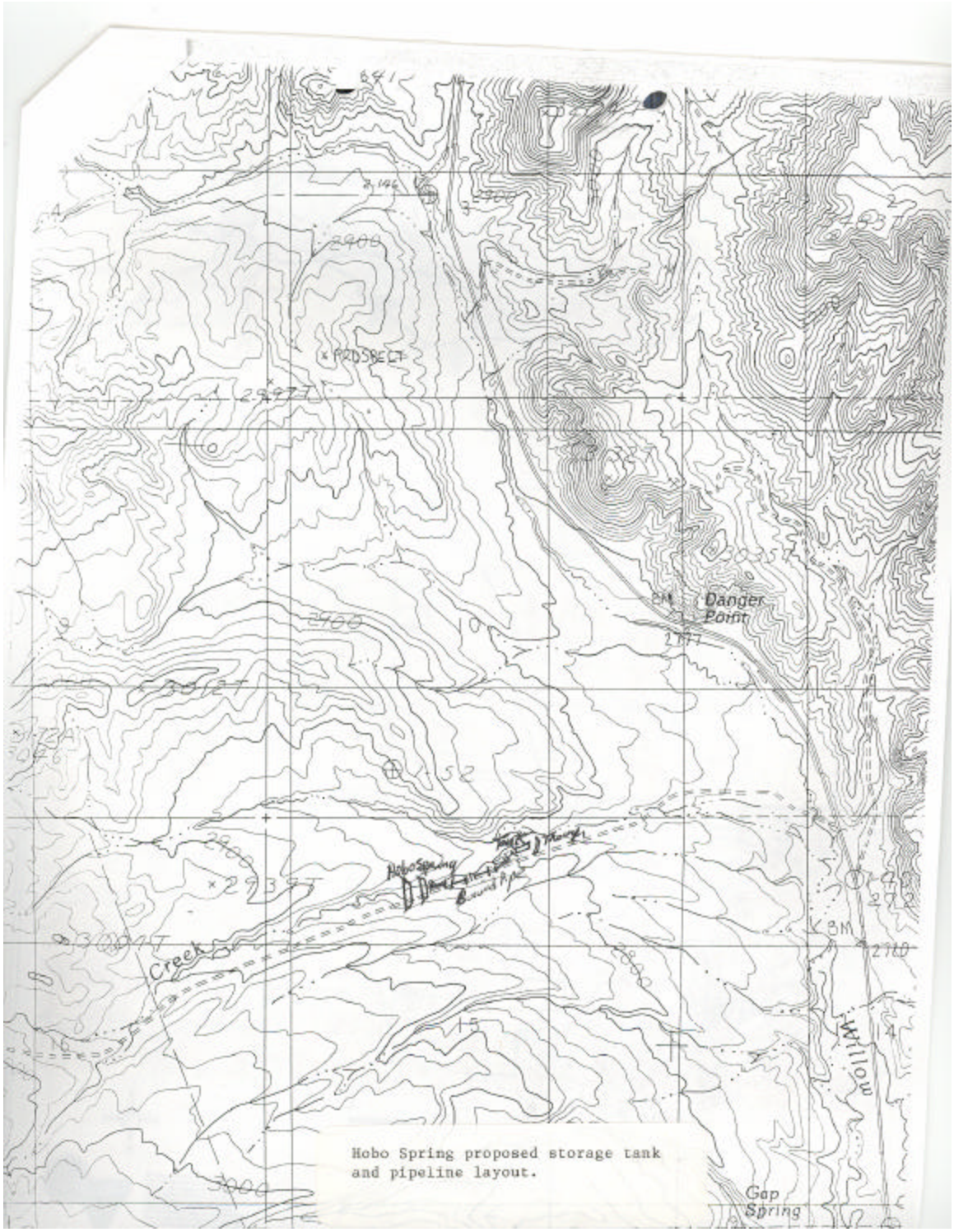
A file search completed February 11, 2003, identified no additional requests by members of the public to be considered an interested public for Freezeout Allotment.

10 Literature Cited

USDI-BLM 1981. Rangeland Program Summary (RPS) Record of Decision, Ironside EIS Area. U.S. Bureau of Land Management. Vale District, Oregon. 16 p.

USDI-BLM. 2000. Proposed Southeastern Oregon Resource Management Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement (April 2001). U.S. Bureau of Land Management, Vale District, Oregon. 3 v.

USDI-BLM 2001. A Guide to Managing, Restoring, and Conserving Springs in the Western United States. Technical Reference 1737-17. U.S. Bureau of Land Management. Denver, Colorado. 70p.



Hobo Spring (JDR 4087) (T.19S., R.41E., W.M. Section 15) proposed layout of storage tank and trough placement.

Hobo Spring (JDR 4087) (T.19S., R.41E., W.M. Section 15) Proposed trough location (view west).

Hobo Spring (JDR 4087) (T.19S., R.41E., W.M. Section 15) existing troughs on a whitetop dominated bench (view east).

Hobo Spring (JDR 4087) (T.19S., R.41E., W.M. Section 15) lower spring box (view east).

Hobo Spring (JDR 4087) (T.19S., R.41E., W.M. Section 15) riparian vegetation community between spring boxes with 2002 mid-summer livestock grazing (view east).

Hobo Spring (JDR 4087) (T.19S., R.41E., W.M. Section 15) upper spring box (view east).